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Top Diplomatic Defense Heads Meet Ike

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Special to Tribune Staff Writer

Washington, Jan. 2 —

American troops in the orient stood at a ready alert today as President Eisenhower met again with top diplomatic and



Gen. Lemnitzer (left), and Secretary Herter leave White House after conference.

military leaders over the situation in Laos.

The defense department only issued a statement, cleared by the President, which stated that normal precautionary actions to increase readiness of troops and air lift capabilities have been taken "in view of the present situation in Laos."

Act More with Caution

The government appeared to be moving with caution because of conflicting reports over the actual status of the fighting in the tiny country which has been called a buffer between Red China and small pro-western nations in Asia.

A virtual news blackout existed in Laos. A state department spokesman said there was no doubt the nation had been invaded, but the strength, nationality or intention of the forces was not known.

James C. Hagerty, White House press secretary, said the defense department announcement was made in view of this country's obligations to the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), operating on normal holiday schedules.

300 Millions in Aid

Laos is not a member of SEATO, but it borders on Thailand, which is. The United States has poured an estimated 300 million dollars in aid into Laos since World War II for its defense and improvement of the economy.

and Britain over our foreign policy there.

The Communists have been air dropping supplies to native troops over the protests of the United States. An unarmed American plane was fired on while flying over the nation last week.

Keep Kennedy Advised

A state department spokesman said President-elect Kennedy is being advised of developments by Dean Rusk, who will be Kennedy's new secretary of state, and by Allen Dulles, central intelligence agency chief.

Rusk and Christian A. Herter, outgoing secretary, met during the afternoon, partly to talk about the Laos situation. The spokesman emphasized, however, that all decisions being made were those of the present administration.

President Eisenhower met with Herter and defense department chiefs. Staffs at both the defense and state departments, however, were

Treaty organization (SEATO) operating on normal holiday schedules.

Bases of U. S. Forces

The defense department declined to identify units in the Pacific which could help defend Laos, but the bulk of the manpower could come from these areas: Formosa, Philippine Islands, Okinawa, and Japan.

Most American planes can fly nonstop into fields near Saigon and Bangkok from any of the bases, all of which could also be used as staging areas for troops. The air force, thru these years between the force, has conducted exercises throughout the orient in which it moves complete units from permanent bases such as Okinawa to temporary fields of operation many miles away.

Supply would become a major problem in the area in the event of war.

Laos, about the size of Kansas and with 2 million persons, is flanked to the north by Red China and North Viet Nam and is ringed by Burma, South Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Thailand. Its geography is a little like that of West Virginia—mountains, plateaus, and some plains.

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